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ABSTRACT

A study was made of professional qualifications for personnel employed as program evaluators and auditors. These qualifications, according to operational or theoretical models, are necessary to assure local school districts of obtaining the services of competent and ethical personnel. Findings of (1) a review of literature, (2) a national survey of directors and staffs of research and program evaluation departments of public schools, (3) a review of representative contractual relations and job qualifications in use, (4) a survey of ten university training programs, and (5) a survey of legislators to determine the attributes of an evaluation report which make it acceptable as a basis for decision-making, are reported. Criteria for employment of program evaluators and auditors are recommended, and the political implications of an accrediting process are discussed. (Author/BW)

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DESIRABLE QUALIFICATIONS FOR PERSONNEL CONDUCTING EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM EVALUATIONS AND AUDITS

A paper presented at the American Educational Research Association
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by

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DESIRABLE QUALIFICATIONS FOR PERSONNEL CONDUCTING EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM EVALUATIONS AND AUDITS[1]

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As the evaluation of educational programs increases in number and importance, the following questions have become more frequent in the literature as discussion topics among training institutions and as areas of concern expressed by prospective clients of evaluators:

1. What qualifications should personnel who label themselves educational program evaluators and auditors or who perform such services have?
2. What training and experiences in educational program evaluation are being offered by institutions of higher learning?
3. What evaluative criteria impact on legislators in their decision-making roles?

The major purposes of this study were to determine the present state of thinking regarding qualifications for educational program evaluators and to match such findings with theoretical and operational criteria. Another purpose was to determine what aspects of program evaluation are considered important to legislators.

The following activities were undertaken to answer the above:

1. A review of the literature was made.
2. A survey of representative national public school directors and staffs of research and program evaluation departments was conducted to determine desirable qualifications.
3. A review of selected higher education training programs for evaluators was conducted.
4. Interviews with selected program administrators were conducted, and a survey of the California Legislature and Congressional representatives was made.

A review of recent literature revealed an array of new book titles and periodical articles related to educational program evaluation. While some writers such as Walberg (1974), offered practical suggestions often in the form of case studies, others were more generic and theoretical. The ERIC file offered a number of examples of documents which yielded exhortative requests for more specialized training of program evaluators. Worthen (1972) and Popham (1975), among others, have recently addressed the issue of evaluator qualifications directly. The California Society of Educational Program Auditors and Evaluators will focus on qualifications for educational evaluators at its conference in May 1976.

The surveyed literature indicated that educational program evaluators were: (1) thrust into the midst of political as well as pedagogical arenas, (2) in need of clarifying their roles, (3) in need of operating effectively with both lay and professional personnel, and (4) not as well equipped, either by training or experience, to do their jobs. In general, contemporary writers recognized the potential power and actual shortcomings of both program evaluators and their products.

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[1] This paper was presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, Calif., April 1976.

Procedure. A survey to determine desirable qualifications for personnel conducting educational program evaluations and audits was conducted nationally. Questionnaires were sent to a sample of 206 directors and staffs of research and program evaluation departments of public school LEAs and selected intermediate units. Ninety-five directors and staffs of research departments for public school agencies in grades K-14 in Los Angeles County and 111 directors and staffs listed on the Large City and County Test Directors' Roster distributed by Personnel Press, were surveyed. One hundred twenty-two (59%) usable surveys were returned.

A second survey to determine the aspects of an evaluation report, which legislators deem as important in accepting such a report as valid and reliable and upon which they would make a political decision, was made of 120 California Legislators and 45 California Congressmen. Sixteen usable surveys were returned; another 16 unusable surveys were returned. Interviews with 24 project directors in California and 22 practicing evaluators in California were conducted to determine their perception of criteria for practicing educational program evaluators.

Results. In the area of formal training, the respondents indicated variability as to the number of semester units which should be required of program evaluators. Those courses which are often labeled "educational foundation courses" generated two types of responses: a consensus for minimal training (one or two courses) to a split between minimal or no training needed. (See Table 1.)

TABLE 1

Percent of Responses for Number of College/University Course Semester Units Required for Program Evaluators

Course	Type of Course	No. of Semester Units*					N by Item
		3	6	9	12	None Needed	
1. Business	1 F	30	10	5	4	54	105
2. Child Growth and Development	2 F	35	27	16	12	12	113
3. Computer Methodology	3 T	45	29	12	4	12	112
4. Curriculum Development	4 F	24	32	19	19	8	117
5. Experimental Design	5 T	27	38	15	16	5	116
6. Evaluation Procedures	6 T	14	30	22	33	2	116
7. History of Education	7 F	37	5	2	0	61	110
8. Instructional Methodology	8 F	36	24	20	10	12	115
9. Instructional Technology	9 F	38	24	10	9	20	108
10. Learning Theory	10 F	41	27	17	10	6	115
11. Multivariate Analysis	11 T	41	29	14	3	14	109
12. Philosophy of Education	12 F	56	13	2	1	32	112
13. Research Design	13 T	25	35	19	19	2	113
14. School Administration	14 F	32	28	9	6	28	116
15. School Law	15 F	57	12	1	3	31	114
16. Sociology of Education	16 F	47	14	3	3	38	111
17. Theory of Measurement	17 T	37	36	15	11	2	115
18. Univariate Analysis	18 T	52	17	15	4	13	106
19. Other (specify):		24	18	6	12	7	17

F - Foundation course
T - Technical course

*The percentage is rounded off to the nearest whole number

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Those foundation course items showing consensus for minimal training were: Child Growth and Development (2), Instructional Methodology (8), Instructional Technology (9), and Learning Theory (10). Foundation course items showing a split in that nearly one-third of the respondents favored either minimal or no coursework were: Business (1), History of Education (7), Philosophy of Education (12), School Administration (14), School Law (15), and Sociology of Education (16).

In general, there was greater consensus regarding the need for specialized or technical courses: Computer Methodology (3), Experimental Design (5), Evaluation Procedures (6), Multivariate Analysis (11), Research Design (13), School Administration (14), Theory of Measurement (17), and Univariate Analysis (18). Minimal to considerable training was indicated for all the technical courses, with the most training needed in Evaluation Procedures (6). Two areas of technical expertise which yielded a greater spread, particularly in the "None Needed" category, had to do with Computer Methodology (3) and Data Analysis (11 and 18).

There was more agreement among respondents to formal degree and/or credential requirements than for training of program evaluators. (See Table 2.) While 91% of the respondents indicated that a B.A. should be mandatory, and 60% felt that an M.A. was mandatory, only 6% felt that a doctorate was mandatory. Forty-two percent of those surveyed indicated that a teaching credential was mandatory while administrative or pupil credentials were felt to be necessary by 14% and 10%, respectively. Thirty-two percent indicated that a state credential for program evaluators should be mandatory.

The types of field experiences required of program evaluators related positively with the formal credential requirements. (See Table 3.) While 42% of the respondents felt that a teaching credential was mandatory, 44% felt that classroom teaching experience should be required. Similarly, where 14% would mandate an administrative credential, 19% would require administrative or other adult support experience.

Experience as an internal evaluator was deemed a requirement by 30% of the respondents while experience as an external evaluator was considered a requirement by 20% of those surveyed. External auditing experience was considered a requirement by only 12% of the respondents.

Personal attributes required by educational program evaluators were ranked as follows: (1) Ability to meet project requirements, (2) Ability to speak and write appropriately for technical and non-technical audiences, and (3) Ability to organize tasks. (See Table 4.) The top three ranked attributes focused on the individual competencies of the evaluator as opposed to the next set of three attributes which focused on interpersonal relationships: (4) Ability to get along with employer, (5) Ability to get along with professionals of equal training, and (6) Ability to get along with professionals of lesser technical training.

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TABLE 2

Percent of Responses for Degree to Which Program Evaluators Should Meet Formal Requirements

Requirement	Degree of Requirement*				N by Item
	Mandatory	Important	Desirable	Unnecessary	
20. B.A.	91	3	4	2	99
21. M.A.	59	26	12	3	115
22. Ph.D./Ed.D.	6	14	57	23	117
23. Teaching Credential	42	19	28	11	116
24. Administrative Credential	14	26	38	22	118
25. Pupil Services Credential	10	24	37	29	119
26. State Credential for Program Evaluation were one to exist	32	26	27	15	115
27. Other (specify):	11	0	11	78	9

TABLE 3

Type of Experience	Degree of Requirement*				N by Item
	Required	Important	Desirable	Unnecessary	
28. Classroom Teaching	44	25	26	5	120
29. Counseling or Other Pupil Support Experience	6	29	46	19	115
30. Administration or Other Adult Support Experience	19	30	39	12	117
31. Internal Evaluator	30	39	27	4	119
32. External Evaluator	20	41	32	7	117
33. External Auditor	12	32	44	12	111
34. Other (specify):	40	10	10	40	10

*The percentage is rounded off to the nearest whole number

Twelve percent of the respondents wrote comments in the "Other" categories. The majority of write-in comments on all parts of the survey primarily focused on the interpersonal skills of program evaluators, rather than specifying coursework or formal training experiences. Respondents appeared to be willing to overlook formal qualifications for proven human interaction skills and sensitivity to the factors operating in the process of conducting the evaluation of educational programs.

A review of catalogs from 10 universities representing the eastern, central, and western states revealed that the 10 institutions offered doctorates in evaluation and research either as separate programs or under departments of educational psychology. (See Table 5.) Descriptors in six of the universities specifically noted public schools as potential recipients of the specialized coursework for program evaluators for which they train.

In a majority of cases, courses dealing with some aspects of program evaluation and/or research design were also included in departments other than educational psychology — most often, curriculum within schools of education and psychology or business/management outside of the schools of education.

TABLE 4

Ranking of Personal Attributes Which Program Evaluators Should Possess

1. Ability to meet project requirements
2. Ability to speak and write appropriately for technical and non-technical audiences
3. Ability to organize tasks
4. Ability to get along with employer
5. Ability to get along with professionals of lesser technical training
6. Ability to get along with professionals of equal training
7. Ability to write logically
8. Ability to speak clearly
9. Ability to write clearly

TABLE 5

List of University Catalogs Reviewed

Michigan State University
Teachers College, Columbia University
University of California at Los Angeles
University of Chicago
University of Colorado
University of Connecticut
University of Indiana
University of Pennsylvania
University of Southern California
Wayne State University

Project directors concur with the findings of the national survey for the types of formal degree/credential and field experiences considered desirable for educational program evaluators. (See Table 6.) The single most important criterion was evidence of successful performance prior to employment either as an internal or external evaluator. Successful was functionally defined as being able to perform the evaluation process in a cost-effective manner and being sensitive to the political and psychological factors involved. No differentiation was made between evaluators and auditors.

Agreement on formal degree/credential and field experiences with the national survey was also found for practicing program evaluators and auditors. (See Table 7.) Practitioners, however, identified formal training experiences as important for employment or contract criteria more than did project directors.

Political decision makers in the California Legislature and California Congressmen ranked the Reputation of the Evaluator as the most important criterion by which they would make a political decision regarding a program based upon an evaluation report. (See Table 8.) Second and third rankings were the degree to which a given study corroborated previous findings and the degree of technicality of the report, respectively.

TABLE 6

List of Agencies Contacted for Project Directors' Criteria for Program Evaluators

Azusa Unified School District
Burbank Unified School District
Calgary Regional Office of Education
California Commission for Teacher Preparation and Licensing
California State Department of Education
Downey Unified School District
Garvey School District
Lennox Unified School District
Los Angeles Unified School District
Office of the Los Angeles County Superintendent of Schools
San Diego Community College District
Ventura Unified School District

TABLE 7

List of Agencies Contacted for Practitioners' Criteria for Program Evaluators

Downey Unified School District
L. E. Orcutt and Associates
LaVerne College
Office of the Los Angeles County Superintendent of Schools
University of Southern California
Ventura Unified School District

TABLE 8

Ranking of Important Aspects of an Educational Program Evaluation Report by Members of the California Legislature and California Congressmen (N=165)

1. Reputation of the evaluator
2. Degree to which the study corroborates previous findings
3. Degree of technicality of report
4. Cost of the study
5. Use of comparison group(s)
6. Utility of the study for the profession
7. Congruence between program objectives and assessment devices
8. Credibility of the agency the evaluator represents
9. Independence of the evaluator from the project
10. Representativeness of sample
11. Rationale of the programs to be evaluated
12. Validity of the evaluation design

Discussion and Recommendations. As a result of the survey findings and review of the literature and university catalogs, the following profile of an educational program evaluator emerges as being desirable:

Training: A program evaluator should have at least one three-unit course in the following foundation areas:

Child Growth and Development
History of Education
Instructional Methodology
Instructional Technology
Learning Theory
Philosophy of Education
School Administration
School Law
Sociology of Education

He should have at least two three-unit courses in Curriculum Development.

He should have at least one three-unit course in the following technical areas:

Computer Methodology
Multivariate Analysis
Theory of Measurement
Univariate Analysis

He should have at least two three-unit courses in Experimental Design and Research Design, and he should have at least three three-unit courses in Evaluation Procedures.

Formal Requirements: A program evaluator must possess a B.A. degree and should possess an M.A. degree. He should be a credentialed teacher and hold a state credential in program evaluation if such a credential exists.

Types of Field Experiences: A program evaluator should have taught in the classroom and had some kind of evaluation experience as either an internal or external evaluator.

Personal Attributes: A program evaluator must be able to meet project requirements, have the ability to speak and write appropriately for technical and non-technical audiences, and be able to organize tasks related to evaluating educational programs.

In general, there appears to be consensus by research and project directors with practicing evaluators as to what formal degree/credential requirements and field experiences are desirable. They also agree as to what personal attributes are needed. As a group, practitioners place more importance on technical training than do their employers.

Politicians, while believing the worth of an educational program evaluator's report to be a function of the reputation of the evaluator, showed some contradiction in attributing importance to technical aspects of a report. While the respondents ranked the degree of corroboration with previous findings and the technicality of a report high (2 and 3, respectively), they also ranked the representativeness of the sample as important and the validity of the evaluation design as least important, (11 and 13, respectively). It may be premature to draw any conclusions from such a small sample of political respondents. One could infer that politicians either did not understand the survey, did not feel it was worthy attending to, or placed little importance on program evaluation reports as a factor in making political decisions. If any of the above three speculations are true, program evaluators are in need of a professional lobbyist, in the opinion of the writer.

A program evaluator can obtain the necessary training from institutions of higher learning. Although the requisite foundation courses and a majority of the technical courses are offered by university schools of education, some technical coursework may have to be taken in areas offered outside of schools of education.

Because of the political aspects of educational program evaluation, an evaluator will probably learn to be sensitive to lay and professional individuals and groups and their anxieties about or hostility toward evaluators by his direct interactions with such personnel rather than by formal coursework. As one who has been labeled "educational middleman," (Bates, 1967) and one who has been cautioned not to take an absolutist position in his relationship to other educational experts, (Sorenson, 1968), an evaluator must learn the art of interacting as a philosopher-sage as well as a scientist-investigator.

Fortunately, it appears that the potential for upgrading the skills and experiential background for educational program evaluators is real.

Knowing what may be deemed as desirable training, professional experiences, personal attributes, and performance criteria for educational program evaluators is not the same thing as knowing what practicing evaluators actually have had in the way of training and experience or what their professional behavior is like. Whether a study to determine the current state of the art for practicing evaluators would yield findings which would be reassuring or horrifying to members of this association or client agencies is irrelevant. What is important is to devote as much time and energy to the careful training, education, and development of educational program evaluators as is devoted to the construction of complex, multi-dimensional matrices of educational program evaluation models. And after such pedagogical issues have been tended to, it appears that activities to make the professional educational program evaluator and his product an important part of the political process need attending to, also.

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